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Wasatch County gearing up for 2002 Winter Olympics

Construction begins on Soldier Hollow biathlon venue in spring; Heber hotel rooms already booked

By IRENE HASTINGS
Herald Correspondent

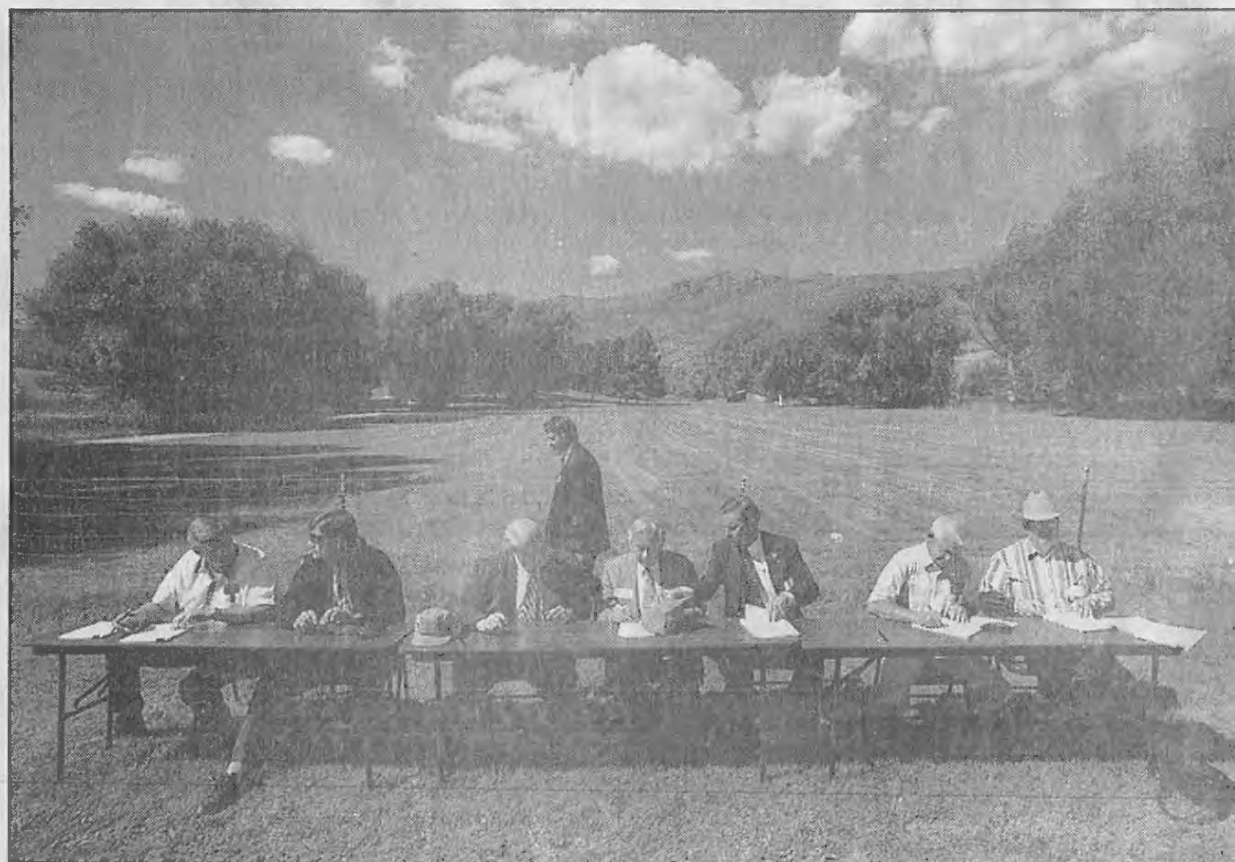
CHARLESTON

Construction begins this spring on the competition management building and support facilities for the Olympic biathlon and cross-country biathlon venue at Heber Valley's Soldier Hollow.

Soldier Hollow is in the Charleston area.

According to Robyn Pearson, Wasatch County economic and development director, the backbone of the infrastructures should be completed this year. That includes the sewer, water and power lines, which will tie into the existing lines using a mobile transformer. A larger water pump will be installed to meet Olympic needs. All lines will be laid underground and will be permanent.

This is the only venue that will be used for all 16 days of the Olympics. Athletes from around the world are expected to arrive here several months



Olympic vision: Members of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee, along with other state and local officials, sign a contractual agreement at Wasatch Mountain State Park to designate which facilities will be

Local commissioners and government representatives plan to visit a former Olympic site, probably in Canada, to gather more information about their facilities. A face-lift of Main Street also may be in the works.

The 10,000-square-foot competition management building at Soldier Hollow is designed to blend into the landscape. The stadium will serve as an administrative building and a national training center for sports after the Olympics.

Various rooms on the ground level will accommodate grooming and equipment. These rooms will be permanent while the bleachers will be temporary. A target shooting range will also be permanent.

Wasatch Mountain State Park is working with the Salt Lake Organizing Committee to build permanent facilities to house maintenance equipment, such as snowcats, snowmobiles and other equipment necessary to maintain trails and mountain areas.

Daily Herald file photo

acclimatize.
Approximately 20,000 people are expected to be present for the Olympic events.

Pearson said the stadium and support facilities must be completed by the year 2000, when a number of pre-Olympic events will be at the venue,

including the NCAA championships and the World Cup.

Local and state agencies have a jump start in preparations for utilities, law enforcement, marketing and housing. Local law enforcement and oth-

ers outside of the valley have formed information teams to deal with these issues.

Other crucial issues, such as security and broadcast technology also are being planned. Local law enforcement will not

be expected to be responsible for the overall security, but will play an important role in traffic control and related duties. The airport will also play a strategic role for helicopter teams and as a center for air traffic.

housing and entertainment for Olympic athletes, their coaches, families and support teams.
"We want this to be a memorable experience for them," Pearson said. "We want this to be more than an Olympic venue, but a destination venue for years to come."

Charleston residents balk at proposed sewage impact fee

By IRENE HASTINGS
Herald Correspondent

HEBER VALLEY — More than 100 residents from Charleston gathered at a public meeting here recently to oppose a proposed \$2 million sewerage system.

Approximately \$1.5 million dollars for the project would come from federal and state funds tied to the Olympic venue in Charleston's Soldier Hollow.

The Charleston Town Board was seeking support for a further study to determine exact costs and the impact of a sewer system upon the community.

The study cost was estimated at \$15,000 to \$20,000. A hand vote was indecisive.

The board plans to seek expert information on the sewer system, its costs and its impact on the community. The board has also had a survey form hand-delivered to each household.

When all the information

has been gathered, the board will present it to the community at a series of open houses. A written vote will then be taken.

Rural atmosphere

Charleston, with 479 residents, is located on the east banks of Deer Creek Reservoir, and bordered on the south by Highway 189 that snakes down Provo Canyon.

It's not just the installation of the sewer that will impact the community, residents say, but the possibility of opening the flood gates to large housing development projects and the related loss of their cherished small town, rural lifestyle.

Residents want to keep their quality of living as close as possible to what presently exists. They say they're willing to make some concessions to progress, but want to preserve the country atmosphere and open spaces.

Many residents have lived here for decades. Others were

born and raised here and want to preserve the rural environment for their children.

Newcomers to the area say they "moved here because we wanted to get away from the city."

Money problem

Many residents also oppose the system on the basis of cost.

"There is only so much money people here can afford," said former mayor Calvin Probst. Estimated impact fees would cost each household \$2,300 initially with an additional estimated \$35 per month to pay for lateral extensions onto private property.

Charleston is unique since the older, pioneer-settled part of town is now covered by the waters of Deer Creek Reservoir. The "newer" part of Charleston was saved from this fate and has developed its own legends and heritage, which residents are adamant about preserving. Many of them see the sewer as

a threat to this heritage through expanded growth.

The sewer issue dates back 20 years to when the Heber Valley Special Service District was formed as a result of warnings by the Environmental Protection Agency that the area needed to meet federal requirements.

Probst was mayor at the time and he and other board members studied the possibility of a sewer system. They decided it would be too expensive.

Options

A panel consisting of Whiting; Robyn Pearson, Wasatch County economic and development director; Nancy Hess, Utah Division of Water Quality; Wes Johnson and Scott Robertson, Horrocks Engineering; and Phil Wright, Wasatch County health director, made presentations in their areas of expertise during the recent hearing.

Opposition

Several residents denounced the sewer. One, who asked to remain anonymous, said "flushing my toilet for free is one of the few pleasures I have."

The meeting was adjourned by Whiting when some members of the audience became disruptive. Residents clustered in groups to continue the discussions afterward.

Long life for Soldier Hollow? TRACK

Group wants venue to thrive after the Games

By Donna M. Kemp
Deseret News staff writer

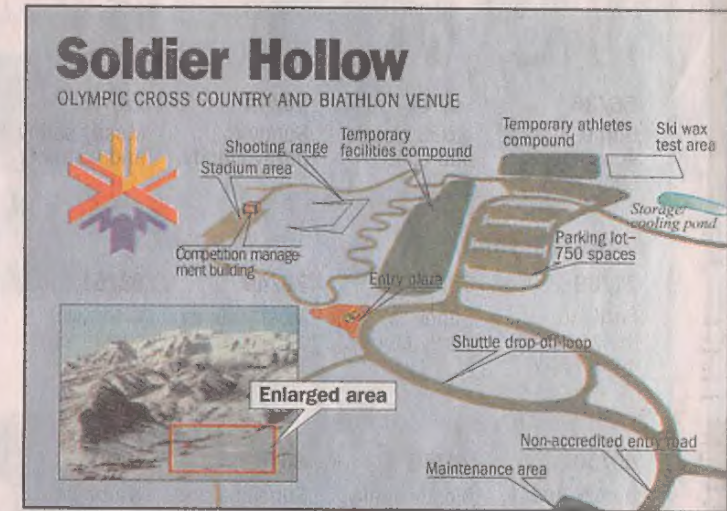
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WASATCH MOUNTAIN STATE PARK — While Olympic organizers race toward a deadline for the 2002 Winter Games, the Soldier Hollow Legacy Committee is looking beyond the finish line.

The committee, made up of local and state officials and former Olympians, has been meeting for about a year to come up with a way to turn the biathlon and cross-country skiing venue — soon to be under construction at Wasatch Mountain State Park's Soldier Hollow — into a world-class training and competition center.

The focus is much more than simply the 1,000 days before the Olympics, said State Parks director Courtland Nelson. "It's what the legacy will be 1,000 days after the Olympics."

When the Games are over,



organizers hope the cross-country and skiing venue will become more than just a treasured memory.

The committee envisions Soldier Hollow will be used by everyone from elite athletes to weekend novices. In the summer, the 23 kilometers of trails could be turned into hiking and equestrian trails. (There are plans for a permanent snow-making system on at least five kilometers of trails.)

The barrier? Money. Nelson said state parks can't

be saddled with the cost of maintaining it. He urged the group recently to form a nonprofit corporation to help finance a year-round facility.

Committee members took his advice to heart. They will meet 8 a.m. Tuesday at the Wasatch Mountain State Park Clubhouse to discuss the process of establishing a nonprofit group.

It will be expensive — about \$200,000 a year simply to

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maintain the course during the winter, said John Aalberg, a two-time U.S. Olympian and director of cross-country for the Salt Lake Organizing Committee.

A nonprofit foundation is a good way to seek donations, explained Nancy Devenport, a state parks development coordinator.

"People don't want to give to state government because they don't know what their donations are being used for. And a lot of foundations and corporations won't give to local entities," Devenport said. The most successful "friends" groups that form to raise money for specific recreational areas are those that have a dedicated board of directors, she added.

SLOC is set to spend \$21.4 million building Soldier Hollow ski trails and making other preparations for the Olympics. (There's another \$1.3 million set aside for the Paralympics.) Still, that's a mere pittance of what it cost organizers in Nagano, Japan — \$80 million —

to build two separate courses for the cross-country and biathlon events during the 1998 Winter Games, noted Aalberg.

The committee also will seek the state's help.

Lawmakers agreed in 1994 to sell the facilities to SLOC for the \$59 million that taxpayers spent to build them, plus another \$40 million to keep them open after the Olympics. The facilities would be turned over to another private entity, the Utah Athletic Foundation, which will have control of the \$40 million.

The committee believes Soldier Hollow is entitled to the money even though ownership would remain with the state. And it doesn't think \$40 million is enough since it will be shared with other facilities.

"We need to make sure that money is adequate," said Steve Roberts, the legislative liaison for the state parks.

There are other financial concerns.

Lyle Nelson, a four-time U.S. Olympian and SLOC's biathlon manager, tried to reassure the group that cuts in the \$1.45 billion

Games budget won't likely impact pre-Olympic events at Soldier Hollow.

Though SLOC is under pressure to "tighten belts," Nelson said, "we've been told the sports budget will not be impaired."

Wasatch County Olympic coordinator Robert Mathis wasn't entirely convinced.

"I wouldn't underestimate the pressure," Mathis said. "We have real reason to be concerned."

It's important that Soldier Hollow be given state financial support because it's one of the few Olympic sites that would be used by the public, said Bill Spencer, a technical committee member with the International Biathlon Union who competed in the 1964 and 1968 Olympics.

"This is a lifetime sport," he said.

That's why it's important to make sure Soldier Hollow stays busy, Aalberg said.

"We want to have youth programs," Aalberg said. There's no reason to spend millions to develop the cross-country and biathlon venue only to get kids all excited about the sport, then watch Soldier Hollow, and Olympic dreams, die.

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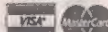
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